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THREE EPISODES

FROM

“CANDĪ.”

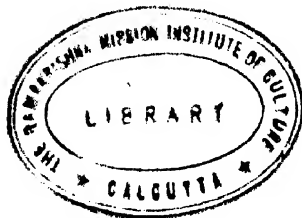
THREE EPISODES

FROM

THE OLD BENGALI POEM

“CANDĪ,”

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH
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CALCUTTA :
PUBLISHED BY THE ASIATIC SOCIETY OF BENGAL,
57, PARK STREET,

1902.

HERTFORD:

PRINTED BY STEPHEN AUSTIN AND SONS. .

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PREFACE.

MUKUNDA RĀM CĀKRAVARTĪ,¹ some extracts from whose poems I wish to introduce to the English reader, lived in Bengal during the latter half of the sixteenth and the early part of the seventeenth century. He seems to have passed his life in the districts of Bardwān and Midnapur, and he commemorates in his works Mānsinh, the celebrated general of the Emperor Akbar, who became governor of the newly conquered provinces of Bengal, Bihār, and Orissa in 1590. But his poems tell us as little of the wars and conquests which fill the history of Akbar's reign, and which naturally engrossed the thoughts of the poet's contemporaries, as Spenser's "Faery Queen" tells us of the actual events which stirred men's hearts during the reign of Queen Elizabeth. Mukunda Rām's characters, in fact, live in a mythological world as far removed from the actual world of human life as those in Ovid's "Metamorphoses"; and the Goddess Caṇḍī continually appears upon the scene to help her votaries and confound their enemies, as if they were living in the earliest mythological ages. But all this is only the external form of the poem. Under this fanciful surface we come in contact with a solid reality; for there we may find a picture of Bengali village life as it actually existed in the sixteenth century, before any European influences had begun to affect the national character or widen its intellectual or moral horizon; and it is this vivid realism, which gives such a permanent value to the descriptions. Our author is the *Crabbe*

¹ He is often called by the title *kabi-kañkan*, "the ornament of poets."

among Indian poets, and his work thus occupies a place which is entirely its own.

“ Quidquid agunt homines, votum, timor, ira, voluptas,
Gaudia, discursus, nostri est farrago libelli ”,

and hence the poem forms in itself a storehouse of materials for the social history of the people as apart from their rulers. Wherever he may place his scenes—in Çiva's heaven, or India, or Ceylon—Mukunda Rāṁ never loses sight of Bengal; he carries with him everywhere the village life of his own early days. All family or village customs are dear to him, and his work is therefore a mine of curious local and social information; and his various characters, though they may appear as only passing interlocutors in the scene, always have a real life and personality of their own. In fact, Bengal was to our poet what Scotland was to Sir Walter Scott; he drew a direct inspiration from the village life which he so loved to remember.

I subjoin a translation of the passage at the beginning of the poem where the poet gives an account of his early career, and how he was forced to leave the obscurity of his native place and find a new home and a poet's fame in the court of a neighbouring zemindar.

“ Hear, neighbours, how this song of mine first into conscious utterance
leapt :

Caṇḍī* came down in mortal form beside my pillow as I slept.
Good Gopināth, the talūkdār, lived honoured in Selīmābād; [†]
For generations seven his race the same estates and home had had.
Dāminyā village was their home, far from the world a safe retreat,
Until Mānsinh came to Bengal, that bee of Vishṇu's lotus-feet.
And in his days Mahmūd Sharif over the district stretched his hand;
A local governor sent by heaven to scourge the vices of the land.
Under his rule the traders groaned, his hand lay heavy everywhere,
Brāhmins and Vaiṣṇavas alike stood helpless in their blank despair.

* Caṇḍī (pronounced in English *Chundi*) is one of the forms of the goddess Umā or Durgā (the wife of Çiva), who is especially worshipped in Bengal.

His measures of all fields were false, his acre's rods were always wrong,
And howsoever the poor complained their words were as an idle song.
Waste heaths he reckoned fruitful fields; he passed across the land like
Death;

The poor man's last rag he would seize; prayers to his ears were idle
breath.

The moneylender's aid was naught; his loans but added more to pay;
Two annas short was each rupee, and then the interest day by day.
At last the ryots lost all hope; their hard-earned borrowings brought no
cheer,

And if they tried to sell their stock, there were no buyers far or near.
Good Gopināth by some ill fate was thrown in prison; in wild surprise
The ryots crowded round the court, but what availed their tears or cries?
Stunned with the blow I sold my stock for little more than half its worth,
And after counsel held with friends I left my home and wandered forth.

I and my brother took our way; 't was Caṇḍī led the helpless pair;
At Bheṭṇā Rūprāi gave us alms, and Jadukunḍa sheltering care.
Adown the Ghaṭī stream we sailed, the Dārukeṣvar next we passed;
We stayed awhile at Pāṇḍurpur, and to Kucatyā came at last.

There without oil I took my bath, water my hunger's only stay;
Hungry and faint my children wailed, but I was famished e'en as they.
There near a lonely hermitage, hungry and scared, I fell asleep,
When Caṇḍī in a vision came and bade me rise and cease to weep.

A leaf she brought and pen and ink, and though I knew no Vedic lore,
She taught me metres and their laws and bade me sing her praises o'er.
The river Āilāi then I crossed, to Āraṇī my way I found,

A land with holy Brāhmans filled, its lord like Vyās himself renowned,
Baṅkuṛā-rāy his honoured name; I paid my homage full of fear,
And brought some verses in my hand, to which he lent a favouring ear.
He gave me rice and paid my debts, and made me tutor to his son,
And from that day Prince Raghunāth has stored my lessons every one.

Dowered with all virtues from his birth, sages and nobles at his call,
He greets me 'guru' from his heart and honours me before them all."

While Bābū Gobind Candra Dutt resided in Cambridge some
thirty years ago, I first learned from him about this old Bengali
poem, and he kindly undertook to read it with me. We read

together more than half of it while he remained in England; and after his return to India I continued my studies alone, and he allowed himself to be my continual referee in all cases of difficulty. There were often obscure words and allusions, but he generally solved them all; and he sometimes amused me by his interesting accounts of the consultations which he had held with Calcutta friends over any passages of special obscurity. These attempts of mine to put certain episodes of the "Caṇḍī" into an English dress had lain for many years forgotten in my desk, until I happened to read Mr. G. A. Grierson's warm encomiums on this old Bengali poem "as coming from the heart and not from the school, and as full of passages adorned with true poetry and descriptive power."* This mention of my old favourite rekindled my slumbering enthusiasm, and I have tried to make my imperfect translations as worthy as I could of a place in the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal. I shall be delighted if some younger scholar is roused to an earnest study of this fascinating poem.

With regard to the Bengali text, I may add that, although the "Caṇḍī" is a favourite poem in Bengal, many passages appear to be more or less interpolated, and the readings of many lines are corrupt and obscure. I have generally used the edition printed at Cūncurā in B.S. 1285 (A.D. 1878), but I have often derived help from comparing it with the text in the common bāzār editions printed at Calcutta in Çaka 1789 (A.D. 1867) and B.S. 1286 (A.D. 1879). In my translation I have sometimes ventured to shorten the long descriptions, which are apt to become tedious.

* See his "Note on the Languages of India," p. 108. There is a good account of "Caṇḍī" in R. C. Datt's "Literature of Bengal."

THE OLD BENGALI POEM, CAṆḌĪ.

I.

The hero of the first part of the poem is Kūlaketu. In his former birth he had been Nīlāmbar, the son of Indra; but for an offence committed against the god Śiva in heaven he had been born on earth as a hunter. He marries a peasant's daughter, Phullarā, and lives with her in a hut in a forest which appears to be situated somewhere in the kingdom of Kalinga. Here he supports himself by his bow, and his wife goes to the neighbouring village and sells the meat which he brings home. They are plunged in the depths of poverty; but they are devout worshippers of Caṇḍī, who is resolved to interfere in their behalf. One day the hunter has especially bad luck and wastes the whole day without capturing any game in the forest, except a solitary lizard. This spoil, however, little as he thinks it, is to be the beginning of his good fortune, for Caṇḍī has assumed this disguise to befriend him. He returns home in sad disappointment; and here we commence our first extract.

Famished the hunter reaches home, but finds, alas! his wife away,
For she is gone to Golāhāt to earn a pittance if she may;
Soon she espies him from afar, and full of hope comes hastening home,
But as she marks his empty hands her face is overcast with gloom.
She smites her forehead with her hands, and bursts in tears for sheer despair:
“Why with my husband still alive must I a widow's miseries bear?
Where were the Ghāṭak's* senses gone so evil-starred a match to plan?
My father must have lost his eyes to give me up to such a man!

* The Ghāṭak is the professional arranger of contracts of marriage.

My wedding gifts foretold my fate—turmeric, saffron, pān, forsooth ;
 I should have taken heed betimes, nor sold to poverty my youth."
 With gentle words he comforts her, but still she sobs the same sad tale :
 " There's not one grain of rice at home, and who will buy our goods when
 stale ? "

" Bimalā's mother was your friend ; think you, will she compassion take ?
 Carry some present in your hand, a porcupine* for friendship's sake ;
 Old kindness may be not yet dead ; who knows but she may hear and lend
 Some refuse rice to help our need ; go try your fortune with your friend.
 Borrow besides a little salt and cook some supper for us both,
 I'll go for you to Golāhāt and bear your basket nothing loth.
 And by the bye, packed in my net, you'll find a lizard tied with care ;
 Take it and cook it with the rest ; 't will be a relish to our fare."

She takes her humble present in her hands,
 And at her old friend's door in doubt she stands,
 When from within she hears a cheery shout,
 " Come in, I'm glad at last you've found me out ! "
 " A poor man's wife no time for calls can spare,
 Hunger absorbs my every hour and care."
 Her friend in welcome seats her by her side
 And decks her out in finery like a bride,
 Anoints her hair, and combs and binds her braid,
 And paints with red her forehead, as her maid.
 Poor Phullarā, trembling, makes her errand known,
 And begs some rice—a bushel—as a loan.
 " Oh business for to-morrow," she replies,
 " Comb out my hair and tell your histories."
 Thus sat the friends, linked closely as of old,
 Each heart absorbed in all the other told.

Meanwhile the goddess, left alone thus bound,
 Snapped with a shout the noose which tied her round ;
 She was no more a lizard pinioned there ;
 She stood a maiden now, divinely fair,

* Cf. the lobster brought as a present by the sailors in "David Copperfield." The other ed. reads some flower.

Robed in the costliest garb e'er dreamed by thought,
Which at her will the heavenly artist * brought ;
Bright with all gems, a queen in all her pride,
She stood that lonely hunter's hut beside.

Glad with the stock of borrowed rice she bore,
Poor Phullarā reached at length her cottage door ;
When lo ! her left arm throbbed, and throbbed her eye, †
As she beheld a ' full moon ' standing by !
Surprised she greets the lady with a bow,
" What is thy name and whose fair wife art thou ? "
Laughed in her heart the goddess as she stood,
And mocked poor Phullarā in her joyous mood :
" Of Brāhman caste, Ilāvṛit ‡ is my home,
But all alone I love abroad to roam ;
Of honoured race my lord, none worthier lives ;
But what a household his with seven co-wives ! §
So, by your leave—your kindly heart I knew—
I've come to make a few days' stay with you ! "
As Phullarā heard the words the stranger said,
The very skies seemed tumbling on her head ;
Pain was in her heart, though mild her tone ;
No thirst nor hunger now ; all thoughts of cooking gone !

" What, such a youthful bride as you in a strange house like mine to stay !
Tell me, fair lady, how you dare unguarded and alone to stray ?
That waist of yours waves in the wind, poised like a stalk so light and fair ;
No lion's waist is half so thin, and scarce its burden can it bear.
The bees forsake the jasmine flowers and to thy lips by hundreds fly ;
Thy moon-face wears its gentle smile like summer lightning in the sky.
Those glossy curls, like dark blue hills, wreathed with white jasmine
flowers—I swear
Fate wished to prove her power and fixed the flickering lightning in thy
hair !

* Viçvakarman.

† These are good omens for a woman.

‡ The division of the world which includes Mount Meru.

§ This refers to the seven or eight Çaktis or personified powers of Çiva.

Far brighter than the elephant's gems gleam with a lightning-flash thy teeth,
 While red like bimbās* shine thy lips, a nose-ring gem thy nosa beneath.
 The gauze-like dress that veils thee round and adds a charm to every limb;
 The pearl-like shells upon thy hands,—all makes my mind with wonder dim!
 Say, art thou Urvāṣī come down, or Umā dressed in all her sheen,
 Indrāṇī† or Tilottamā,‡ or say what other heavenly queen?

I cannot fathom in my thought why you have left your husband so?
 Oh I entreat you, tell me true, what spell has brought you down thus low?
 Was it some burst of jealous rage? But if meanwhile of grief he dies,
 Who is to tend his dying hours, as at the ghāt he languid lies?
 Was it some crabbed mother-in-law or husband's sister's scolding tongue?
 I will go with you to your home and try my best to right the wrong."
 "How many questions more?" she said; "here in your house I'm come
 to stop;

Your husband's griefs have pierced my heart, I'll bring him wealth beyond
 his hope.

But would you know the ills I bear? My husband has a favourite wife,§
 Gaṅgā her name, a crown to him; but all the house she fills with strife.
 All day she storms, and he the while eats poison at his wild carouse;
 What wonder that I banish shame and hurry headlong from the house?
 Alas that I was ever born, a helpless woman doomed to be,
 Myself despised, my rival loved! have I not cause for jealousy?
 My cruel father knew full well the hated rival I should find,
 And yet he gave his daughter up, no faintest scruple moved his mind.
 Rich is my lord, and seven co-wives live with him in what peace they may,
 Each hating each, their railing tongues are never silent all the day.
 He eats datura** till his brains are addled, and he wanders on
 Drowsily mooning in a dream, but glad to find himself alone.
 With ashes is his body spread, with bones benecklaced round his throat;
 Thank heaven, he wears a tiger's skin which serves alike for shirt and coat.
 Snakes form his wreaths, he beats his drum, and laughs all worldly joys to
 scorn;

The god of love ne'er ventures near, he knows him for his foe long-sworn.

* The fruit of *Momordica monodelpha*.

† Indra's wife.

‡ A celebrated Apsaras, or nymph.

§ In this description of her husband there is a series of veiled allusions to Çiva as the religious mendicant of the Tantras.

** The thorn-apple (*Datura stramonium*).

My rivals beat me as they will, he sees and hears, but does not care ;
 A house with seven co-wives within,—there's fever-poison in its air.
 Destiny was my cruel foe, and in a hopeless desperate mood
 I recked not of the consequence, but fled alone into the wood.
 I met by chance your hero there ; himself he brought me with him here ;
 Go ask him, and refuse me not, for I have refuge none elsewhere."
 "Not so, I'll teach you what to do, and send you safely to your home."
 Her inmost thought the goddess knew, and said, "To stay with you I've
 come.
 Eat to your fill henceforth, for I will all the house expense provide ;
 Receive me as no stranger-born, but as a friend, one close allied.
 I'll go before your husband's steps, in all his perils I'll be nigh,
 In all his conflicts in the woods a certain sign of victory.
 List, I will tell you who I am, if further history you want ;
 I at Benares live concealed, my husband is a mendicant.
 Wealth of a hundred kings is mine, more than would buy the world," she
 saith ;
 "Such wealth I'll give you ; in return I only ask for trust and faith."
Phullarā. "I'll tell you what is best to do ; back to your husband's house
 return ;
 This will bring comfort in the end, as you, though now perplexed, will
 learn.
 If you forsake your husband's house, how will you show abroad your face ?
 A husband is a woman's lord, her guardian, her one resting-place.
 Others are nought compared to him ; he in both worlds can bring her bliss ;
 He may chastise her as he will, for a king's right and duty this.
 Have you not heard how Sitā once was carried off by Rāvaṇ's guile
 And forced to live a prisoner, shut up in Laṅkā's far-off isle ;
 How Rāma slew the ravisher, but only took her back as queen
 After th' ordeal fire had proved how spotless bright her truth had been ?
 And even then some base-born carle could still so deeply sting his pride,—
 Desperate he drove her forth again a lonely outcast from his side.
 What, shall a lady born like you, so noble, so divinely fair,
 Be angry like some low-born scold and fling her honour to the air ?
 E'en if a low-caste woman stay in a strange house a single night,
 The neighbours point at her with scorn, and all her kindred hate her sight.
 Go, you have done a thoughtless thing ; believe me, to return is best,
 And if your hated rival scolds, pay back her jibes with interest.

Why in a passion leave your home? you sacrificé your all—for what?
 Poisoning yourself for spite to *her*; and will the rival care one jot?"
 The goddess answered: "I am come, because I cannot bear to see
 Your noble husband thus beset with all the ills of poverty.
 And list; I met him in the wood, 't was he himself who brought me here;
 Ask him yourself; if he denies, I'll go and seek my home elsewhere.
 Say what you will, I mean to stay; my wealth shall all your sorrows cure;
 I am a lady as you say, and I will keep my honour pure. °
 I thank you for your good advice, but keep it for some future day;
 You may require it all yourself; fear not that I shall lose my way."

With sad forebodings, next, th' unhappy wife
 Gives the year's history of her struggling life:
 "See this poor hut; a palm-leaf thatch atop;
 One ricinus* post within its only prop;
 How mid such squalor could you bear to stop?
 Baiçākh † (1) begins my misery's calendar:
 Dust-storms sweep by, the suns more fiercely glare;
 But howsoever fierce o'erhead the heat
 I with sore feet must go and sell the meat;
 Ladies may sit 'neath shady trees, but there
 How should I find, alas! a customer?
 E'en in the villages they scarce will buy,
 'Who would eat flesh in Baiçākh?' is the cry.
 These rags ill shield my poor head from the sun;—
 Baiçākh is poison: this for number *one*.
 Jyaistha ‡ (2) is worse; for fiercer still its rays;
 And I, however thirsty 'neath their blaze,
 Yet dare not set my basket down to drink;
 Or kites will empty it before I think;
 Jyaistha's a fasting month to me perforce,
 No month of all the twelve to me is worse.
 Next comes Āṣāḥ (3), to soak the fields and roads;
 And e'en the rich in their well-stocked abodes

* The *Ricinus communis*, or castor-oil plant, is in India a tree which is often thirty or forty feet high.

† Half April and May. I have in this passage chiefly followed the text of the 1867 edition; the last edition begins the list with Āṣāḥ.

‡ Half May and June.

Feel, as they watch their stored provisions fail,
The ills which all the year the poor assail.
I trudge to sell my goods from door to door,
Thankful for refuse rice, nor hope for more.
The leeches bite me as I wade the plains;
Would 't were a serpent's bite to end my pains!
Down pours the rain in Grāvaṇ (4) night and day;
Bright or dark fortnight, which is which, I pray!
But I must bear my basket, wet or fine;
Rags soaked, a never-ending shower-bath mine.
And if the rainfall stops a while o'erhead,
Down come the floods to drown us in our bed.
In Bhādrapad (5) yet fiercer rainfloods fall;
Rivers or streams, one deluge drowns them all.
How can I tell you half our lot of dour?
Brahma was angry, so he made us poor.
Āṣwin (6) is Candī's month, and everywhere
Rams, buffaloes, and goats are slain to her.
All women put their finest dresses on,
All except me; poor Phullarā alone
Must rack her brains for food, or famished die;
With all these victims, who my goods will buy?
Kārttik (7) begins the winter; young and old
Get their warm wraps to shield them from the cold.
Heaven gives good cloth to all save only me;
But some deer's skin my winter cloak must be.
I crouch to warm my blood with head on knees,
Or shiver in the sun and slowly freeze.
Kind Mārgaṣīrṣ (8) of all the months is best:
Now I can eat my bellyful and rest;
Indoors or out, there's food enough, no stint—
Only the piercing cold, death's self is in 't.
I wrap my tasters round me, but they tear,
And, as I clutch them, split and leave me bare.
In Pauṣ (9) the winter's at its height; meanwhile
All men in various ways the cold beguile,
As oil to rub the limbs, or warm attire,
Stolls in the sun or betel by the fire;

All others keep the winter cold at bay,
 And only I must bear it as I may.
 I buy an old torn mat* with venison;
 Its dust is smothering when I put it on;
 Ah! surely fate to women is unjust!
 I scarce can close my eyes at night for dust!
 Then Māgh (10) is dreadful with its fogs and mists;
 Let the poor hunter wander where he lists,
 He finds no deer to catch, for sale or food;
 Nor find I herbs to gather in the wood.
 Oh Māgh's a piteous month for hunting men;
 No one wants flesh, for all are fasting then.
 Phālgun (11) makes most fall ill; but as for me,
 How could I tell you half my misery?
 Fierce is the cold; I pawn in sheer despair,
 For refuse rice, my stone and earthenware;
 My plates and dishes I must all resign!
 Oh what a miserable lot is mine!
 I dig yon hole i' the ground, and when I sup
 Pour the rice gruel in and lap it up!
 In Caitra's (12) month the soft south breezes blow,
 In the sweet jasmine flowers the bees hum low;
 And with the spring's soft influence in their heart
 Maidens and youths are lovesick, though apart;
 All joy save me, but I for some old sin
 Must think of hunger's ravening pangs within."
 The stranger heard to th' end, then said at last:
 "From this day forth these woes of yours are past!
 Think of them as a something now no more,
 Henceforth you share in all my ample store!"
 Her face all soiled with grief and jealous fears,
 Poor Phullarā poured a passionate burst of tears;
 In sudden frenzy from her door she fled,
 And in wild haste to Golāhāt she sped,
 And found the hunter, who in strange surprise
 Stared at her broken voice and streaming eyes:

* The *khosālā* is a coarse mat used by the poor to sleep on, and sometimes also worn for clothing in cold weather.

" You have no sister-in-law, nor rival wife ;
 Whom have you quarrelled with in deadly strife ? "
 " I have no rival wife at home but *you* ;
 Fate has indeed been cruel, you untrue !
 Waking or dreaming—heaven my words will prove—
 You never found me faulty in my love ! . . .
 How have you turned your heart to villany ?
 Why thus become a Rāvan's self to me ?
 Whence this young wife and all her rich array ?
 Beware, the ant gets wings, but falls a prey.[†]
 Kālīṅga's cruel tyrant watches near ;
 He will soon strip you bare, if once he hear."
 " Come, wife, and tell the truth, deceive me not,
 Or I will beat you soundly on the spot."
 " Yama be witness : at our door at home
 A lady stands now waiting till you come."
 Poor Phullarā, when she flew to reach her lord,
 Had with her brought her basket and her board :
 Homeward now start the two, this guest to find,
 But board and basket both are left behind !
 She leads the way in eager hurry back,
 While Kālu,[‡] pondering, follows in her track.
 They reach the hut ; 't is filled with dazzling light,
 As though ten thousand moons illumed the vault of night.

With lowly bow of reverence he thus addressed the stranger fair :
 " A poor and lowly hunter I ; tell me, bright lady, who you are ;
 And why, yourself of brāhman race, or, it may be, of race divine,
 You with your peerless beauty come and enter this mean hut of mine.
 This house betrays my bloody trade ; a lady, if she steps within
 This cemetery strewn with bones, must bathe to cleanse away the sin.
 Go home in haste, while yet the sun lingers in yonder western sky ;
 Go home, I pray, or slanderous tongues will hunt you with their hue and cry.
 Did you come here, fatigued, to rest ? howe'er it be, I pray you, go ;
 Phullarā glad will go with you, and I will follow with my bow.

* For this proverb cf. Wilson's translation of the *Sāṅkhyakārikā*, p. 113. It also occurs in Don Quixote, pt. ii, ch. 53.

† This is a frequent abbreviation of Kālaketu.

Think of poor Sitā ; 'gainst her will the cruel fiend his victim bore,
 But all th' ordeals she endured could not her once-lost home restore.
 Women's good name is only kept, like an old dress, with ceaseless care ;
 Thoughtlessly handled or exposed too often, each is apt to tear."

The goddess heard in silence all he said,
 And as in shame before him bent her head ;
 Impatient now with folded hands he cries :
 "I cannot read your meaning 'neath this guise ;
 But be it what it may, I care not, so
 You only leave this house of mine and go.
 'T is yours to keep your name and honour pure ;
 Be true yourself, and they remain secure.
 But 't is not well here in such guise to come ;
 And why, when questioned, doggedly thus dumb ?
 Some noble's mansion your own dwelling is ;
 What can you want with a mean hut like this ?
 The wealth of kings is round your person hung,
 And yet you stray alone, so fair and young ;
 Have you no fear of robbers as you roam ?
 Low I implore you at your feet, go home."
 Still stood she dumb ; enraged, the hunter now
 Paused not, but fixed an arrow to his bow ;
 Then to his ear the fatal shaft he drew,
 Calling the sun to witness ere it flew.
 Lo ! the bent bow grows rigid in his hands,
 And like a painted archer, there he stands !
 His palsied muscles mock the will's control,
 And tears proclaim his baffled rage of soul.
 In vain he strives to speak one syllable,
 Body and soul are smitten by a spell.
 In vain his wife would take the bow away ;
 He cannot yield it ; it perforce will stay !
 The all-gracious Mother now at last they hear
 Speak in her real voice and stop their fear :

* I remember a Calcutta pupil telling me that an old paṇḍit came one day to his father's house, and as he was about to take his seat on the ground his old dress gave way, and he at once quoted this couplet from our poem.

"Know I am Candī, your true constant friend,
I come to give you blessings without end.
This ancient forest which now darkens round
Thou shalt cut down, and there a city found.
To each man give a cow and rice and land,
And rule thy people with a father's hand;
While every Tuesday shall henceforth be mine,
For solemn sacrifice and worship at my shrine."

Candī then shows the hunter where a great treasure lies buried in seven jars, and she helps him to carry them to his cottage. The next morning he takes a ring from one of the jars and goes off to a money-changer to turn it into hard cash to meet his immediate necessities. But the neighbour owes the hunter an old bill, and gets out of his way, thinking that he is come to dun him for payment.

Poor Kālu calls, "Where is my uncle, pray?
An urgent need has brought me here to-day."
"Alas!" the wife replied, "too late you've come,
Early this very morn he left his home.
A sudden business called him, to my sorrow,
But he will pay your little bill to-morrow.
Meanwhile we've need of wood, so bring some more,
And by one payment he'll discharge each score."
"I'm very grieved to hear that he's away,
My business will admit of no delay;
I came for ready cash a ring to sell;
Some other friend will serve my turn as well."
Smiling, her manner, she began to mend,
"A ring? pray wait a minute, my good friend."
Hearing the sound of gain, by some back gate
Her husband now comes running up elate,
Eager for this new customer with his ring,
And carrying scales and purse for bargaining.
"O nephew, is it you I see at last?
How have the days dealt with you as they passed?"
"Uncle, I start betimes with net and bow,
And roam the woods until the sun is low,

And Phullarā plies her trade, her gains are small,
 And both come home too tired to make a call.
 But I have brought a ring for you to see,
 You'll help me in a great perplexity.
 Deal with me, neighbour, like a generous man,
 Weigh it and please allow me all you can."
 The merchant takes it, and, intent on gain,
 Carefully notes the weight to its last grain.
 "No gold or silver is this ring of thine,
 Only bell-metal polished till it shine.
 Ratis sixteen it weighs—heaven prosper us—
 With two rice grains besides as over-plus;
 Now forty cowries are each rati's rate,
 And twenty cowries pay the extra weight.
 So that makes eight times eighty plus a score;
 Then there's your little bill adds thirty more.
 I dare say part in money will suffice,
 I'll pay the rest in whole or broken rice."
 The hunter thought, "A pretty dream, I wis;
 Are the seven jars at home all false as this?"
 Aloud, "Your offer in your face I fling,
 I'll go and take the fellow back his ring."
 The merchant said: "Five cowries more I'll pay;
 Come let us deal, I'm honest as the day;
 I and your brother oft have dealt, 't was he
 Who told me what a bargainer you could be."
 "Come, give me back my ring, and do not frown;
 I'll show it to some other in the town."
 "I'll add yet fifty more, upon my soul;
 All in good cash, no broken rice nor whole."
 His hands already seemed to grasp the prize,
 But Candī laughed with Lakṣmī in the skies;
 And a clear voice he heard from heaven which told,
 "Think not to cheat the hunter of his gold;
 Give him seven crores in cash, at once paid down.
 Candī has given it to him as his own;
 So shall thy wealth be largely multiplied."
 The merchant heard the words, but none beside;

He turned to the hunter, "I was but in jest,
Take these seven crores, and may thy wealth be blest."
He paid him down the coins, all true and good,
And bade him fetch the oxen for the load.
Homeward the hunter hastened with a will,
But the good news flew even faster still ;
Where'er he went he found the farmers there,
And every ox is pressed its load to bear ;
They crowd around the money-changer's door ;
And into ready sacks the gold they pour ;
Then to the hunter's home they bend their way,
And there he stores his wealth as best he may ;
While every friend in need receives his fee,
And every heart is glad with sympathy.

I here close the first extract, but the original goes on to describe at some length the hunter's adventures after this accession of good fortune. He obeys the goddess' commands and cuts down the forest and founds the city Gujarāt in her honour ; colonists flock to inhabit it and secure the privileges which he offers them. Amongst them comes one Bhānru Datt, and I add a short passage which describes his introduction of himself. It will show how the poem abounds with picturesque episodes, some of which a little remind the reader of Dickens' wealth of minor characters.

Among the foremost Bhānru Datt comes with choice plaintains in his hand,
And in the rear to back him up his brother-in-law close takes his stand ;
With a broad hem sown on his rags, his pen stuck ready in his ear,
Impudently he makes his bow, "Good uncle, hail !" as he draws near.
A tattered blanket is his dress ; a quiet smile lights up his face ;
He waves his arms repeatedly, and in loud voice thus pleads his case :
"Hopes of your favour bridg me here, under your rule to find a home ;
Learn that my name is Bhānru Datt—you'll know it well in days to come.
The Kāyasthas from far and near below my place are forced to fall ;
In family, judgment, moral worth, I am the leader of them all.
Blood of the three best families flows in my veins free from all flaw—
Both of my wives were ladies born, a Mitra is my son-in-law.

All Kāyasthas on either bank of Ganges stream can eat with me ;
I claim them all as kin, and they give us their daughters willingly.
My family's stock has many shoots—wives, mothers, brothers ! it makes
me pant !

Six sons-in-law with families—seven houses is the least we want.
Please give me oxen and a plough, let basket, pedal, fan be sent ;
My gracious lord will nowhere find a worthier recipient."

But, like Sancho in his island, the hunter has little knowledge of the world, and his officials, Bhānru Datt especially, grievously oppress the people ; at last his feudal lord, the King of Kalinga, invades the province, and Kālaketu is conquered and thrown into prison. The goddess Caṇḍī, however, appears in a dream to the king, and her votary is restored to his people ; and at his death he leaves his little kingdom to his son.

II.

The second part of "Caṇḍī" begins, like the first, with the fall from heaven of the nymph Ratnamālā, who, for a forgetfulness in her dancing before Siva and Durgā, is condemned to be born as a mortal on the earth. She is agonized at the sentence, but Durgā promises to protect her, and bids her spread her guardian's worship wherever she is. The nymph is accordingly born as Khullānā, the daughter of Rambhāvatī, who is the wife of Lakshapati, a rich merchant in Iechāni, in the district of Bardwān.

For seven months Rambhāvatī feeds her herself;
 She was overjoyed when she saw her child's first teeth.
 When the year was complete the child runs about from place to place;
 She eagerly puts on various kinds of ornaments.
 Two, three, four, five years go by,
 She plays in the dust with her girl-friends.
 In her fifth year they pierce her ears,
 And every day she puts on beautiful dresses.
 Khullānā grows from day to day;
 When six years had passed, one could not describe her complexion,
 She was beautiful without any ornaments.
 One cannot give any simile for her, she is the farthest limit of beauty,
 the moon shines in her face.*

As she grows up to girlhood, her parents anxiously look in all directions for a suitable son-in-law; but the years pass by and Khullānā still remains unmarried.

In the meantime Dhanapati, a merchant of the neighbouring town of Ujāni, had married Lahanā, the daughter of Lakshapati's eldest brother. They had no children, but Dhanapati was high in favour with the rāja of the district.

* I follow the text of the 1867 edition.

The following adventure introduces him to the reader :—

The merchant and some gay young friends forth sally one bright holiday,
 Bearing their pigeons in their hands, to wander in the fields and play.
 Leaving their palkis they alight and fly their birds in aimless fun,
 Their garments and their ornaments slip down unnoticed as they run.
 Then "Let each hold the female bird," he cries, "and let the other fly,
 And whosoever bird comes back the first shall win the victory."
 The city lads troop round to see and clap their hands in wild delight;
 Up flies the merchant's pet white bird, nor lag its fellows in their flight.
 Each player holds the female bird in his left hand a prisoner fast,
 While the male pigeons soaring up dart to and fro in hurried haste.
 None had as yet turned back, when lo! a falcon hovers in the skies:
 At the fell sight the birds disperse, each for dear life in terror flies.
 Flies like the rest the merchant's 'white,' and towards Icchāni speeds
 its way;

Through thorns and briars, with upturned face, its master follows as he may.
 Holding the female in his left, he calls and calls, but calls in vain;
 Walls, fences, ditches stop him not, he struggles on through grass or cane,
 And close behind his brāhman friend Janārdan toils with might and main.
 Just at that moment Khullanā was playing, by a strange good hap,
 With some girl-playmates out of doors, when drops the pigeon in her lap;
 She covers it beneath her dress, and while the rest in wonderment
 Crowd round about her, she runs home to hide the prize good luck has sent.
 The merchant follows after her, charging her with the robbery;
 "Why have you stol'n my priceless bird? were I to lose it I should die.
 Come, give it back, for, if I'm forced the theft in earnest to report,
 I am the merchant to the king, and great my influence at the court.
 Come, give it back, and end the jest; I see it hid beneath your dress.
 You know I must not venture force, 't would break all rules of politesse."
 Smiling, she whispers to herself, "My cousin's husband, who can doubt?"
 And then aloud, "Your favourite bird you must e'en learn to do without.
 It will not be your meal just yet; thank heaven you 'scape that guilt to-day;
 It grieved my heart to see you run like some low fowler for his prey.
 It came a suppliant to my breast—a suppliant is inviolate;
 This is a rule which overrules e'en merchants of the royal gate.
 Still, if you 'll turn a suppliant too, and all these highflown airs forget,
 And come with straw between your teeth, I may give back your pigeon yet."

The merchant, guessing who the girl must be,
 Takes smiling leave; and, sitting 'neath a tree,
 Hears all the neighbouring gossips' tongues astir,
 But scandal's voice has only praise for her.
 Then to his brāhman friend he turns for aid,
 "Try your best skill to win me this fair maid."
 Proud of th' important message which he bore,
 Janādan hastens to the father's door.
 There he is welcomed with the honours meet,
 A seat is brought, and water for his feet;
 And the pleased father shows his eldest son,
 And names his other children one by one.
 Still some vexed pride inflames the Brāhman's mind,
 Proud of the embassy he kept behind:
 "Is this your welcome for an honoured guest?
 Where are your robes, pān, sweetmeats, and the rest?
 Am I not come on marriage business bent,
 With offer of a noble settlement?
 Your daughter there is twelve years old, I hear;
 And still unmarried—can I trust my ear?
 Happy that father who has safely given
 His daughter to a husband when she's seven;
 She needs no dower to lure the buyer's eyes,
 Kind speeches are enough with such a prize.
 Happy, too, he who weds his child at nine,*
 He saves the funeral honours for his line,
 And for himself wins happiness divine. }
 But you, poor dreamer, blind in heart and brain,
 Have let ten years, eleven, pass in vain.
 Nay, worse than this, you've let the twelfth year come,
 And still she lingers in her father's home.
 A girl of twelve unwed!—remember hell,—
 You as the father are responsible."

The father answered: "You speak well; I will do all a father should.
 Look for some fitting son-in-law in Bardwān or its neighbourhood."

Girls should be only married in their *odd* years.

Of eligible sons-in-law Janārdan then recounts the list,
 But none are worthy of the prize; each is found wanting and dismissed.
 "Of all the merchants of renown on either side of Ganges' stream,
 Like Dhanapati none I find—in wealth, rank, virtue, none like him.
 Ujāni is his native place, the foremost merchant of the land,
 Pious to brāhmans and to gods, like Karna liberal of hand;
 Truthful and just in all his ways, of dramas fond and poetry;
 Lives not on earth the son-in-law worthy of Khullanā but he."
 The father heard with gladdened heart the praise of such a paragon:
 "Arrange the marriage if you can, forthwith secure him as my son."
 Meanwhile, concealed behind the door, his wife o'erheard the conference;
 Little did she approve the scheme, and vehement was her dissidence.
 "How could you ever give consent or waste your breath with such a man?
 I will not sell my child like this—was ever such a monstrous plan?
 What's all your boasted learning worth? it only makes you more a fool;
 Think of my giving up my child to bear a hated co-wife's rule!
 Lahanā's tempers and her storms—'tis not your learned books can show;
 What your own brother's daughter is, who half so well as I can know?
 A foolish thing is this you've done; you've heaped disgrace upon your head;
 How will you show your face abroad or bear the taunts which will be said?
 I'd rather tie her round my neck and plunge with her in Ganges' wave,
 Than give her thus to misery, a hated co-wife's drudge and slave.
 Oh do not listen to the scheme, nor let your judgment be beguiled;
 With such a tigress in the house, what would become of our poor child?
 Khullanā's like a gentle fawn, and would you for a flattering tongue
 Tie such a noose round foot and neck, and do your daughter such a wrong?
 Give her the husband she deserves, so shall our daughter's heart rejoice,
 You shall gain merit by the deed, and men will praise you with one voice."
 "It cannot be,—the astrologers have read the story of her life,
 'Tis written in her horoscope that she must be a second wife."

The mother feels her last appeal is spent,
 And gives reluctantly a sad consent.
 This hindrance smoothed, the father next in haste
 Invites the future bridegroom as his guest.
 He spread a bright red blanket for his seat,
 Water one brought, another washed his feet.

Rambhā in secret scrutinized his face,
 And sent to call the matrons of the place.
 From street to street the maid the message bore,
 And trooping come the gossips to the door;
 Their garments in disorder and their hair
 Loose streaming in their hurry to be there;
 This had one bracelet and one anklet on,
 That had one eye with powder, one with none;
 One leaves her hungry babe, nor heeds its cries,
 One bears her baby with her as she flies.
 The invitation comes by name to few,
 But all the neighbours hear and flock to view,
 And each is welcomed with the honours due.
 Each sees the bridegroom as he sits in state,
 And every one wends homeward, heart and soul elate.

The author next describes the angry grief of Dhanapati's childless wife Lahanā, when she hears from her neighbours that he is thinking of a second marriage, and that the new wife is to be her own uncle's daughter. At first she upbraids her husband with his inconstancy:—

"You have forgotten all your vows, but not for fault of mine; 't was fate,
 Who made not woman's youth and life run side by side, of equal date.
 When the sun sets, the lotus fades nor stays to see itself undone;
 But, when the palm has lost its youth, its withered leaves still linger on."

She is, however, consoled by the gift of a silk dress and five pans of gold to be made into a bracelet. The ojīhā or astrologer is next sent for, and he goes with Janārdan, the family priest, to the house of the bride's father to fix the day for the marriage. The astrologer announces that the next year, as a 'seventh year,' will be very unlucky, which terrifies the father, as his daughter will then be twelve years of age. The marriage, therefore, is hastened in order to fall within the current twelvemonth, and, they finally fix on the 21st of the current month, Phālgun* (which corresponds to part of our February and March). The poet now proceeds to describe the marriage itself, beginning with what takes place in the bride's house:—

* The day of the asterism Uttaraphalgunī.

Lucky the hour and lucky is the day,
 And all the household wear their best array;
 By Rambhā's care, in garments turmeric-dyed,
 The daughter's seated by her father's side.
 And now the matron-world come flocking in,
 Their shouts of *Ulu* rise in cheerful din,
 While the invited guests from far and near
 Come trooping up to share the festal cheer.
 The drum, lute, pipe, gong, cymbals, conch, and bells—
 Every known instrument the concert swells;
 The deafening sounds the house tumultuous fill,
 While dancing girls display their agile skill.
 Next, to the Sun the offerings due are given,
 To Gaṇeś, Brahma, and the planets seven,*
 And her † who guards the children, power benign,
 The churning stick set upright as her sign;
 While chanting priests the Vedic texts repeat,
 And the nine offerings place in order meet—
 Earth, perfumes, stones, rice, dūrbā grass, and flowers,
 Fruits, ghī, and curds—to please the heavenly powers.
 Next silver, gold, a mirror for the bride,
 And pigments, yellow, red, and black, beside;
 Cowries and shells, whose hues were ne'er surpassed,
 And a full dish, with lighted lamps; the last.
 In a clear voice the Brāhmans chant the Ved,
 The while Janārdan binds their hands with thread.
 Next to the Mothers ‡ offerings are addressed,
 To Ruci, Gaurī, Padmā, and the rest,
 And to the Nāndimukh § are set to fall
 The seven due lines of ghī along the wall;
 While Rambhā with her pitcher hurries round,
 Placing the auspicious water on the ground.

* The *grahas* are properly nine, as the ascending and descending nodes are included in the number.

† Śaṣṭhī, i.e. Durgā, as guarding on the sixth day after birth, when the chief danger for mother and child is over.

‡ The sixteen Mātṛis.

§ A particular class of deceased ancestors, in whose honour a special sign is traced with ghī on the wall.

We have next a curious chapter describing the charms which the mother employs in order to secure her daughter's influence over her husband after her marriage. She takes the cord from a buffalo's nose, and a lamp sacred to Durgā, which the servant had previously buried in the ground; this will ensure his being as docile as any animal whose nose is pierced.* The entrails (?) of a snake are next procured from a snake-catcher's house, and the gall of a *rohit* fish caught on a Tuesday. A cow's skull is brought from a cotton-field, on which the merchant is to be made to stand for twice twenty minutes; he will then be dumb as a cow, however Khullanā may scold him; and a friend of hers, a brāhman woman, brings her some asses' milk and curds† in a half-baked dish to complete the charm.

Meanwhile, like Kāma's self impersonate,
In his own house the merchant sits in state;
Brāhmans recite their praise, the *nāch*-girls sing,
And with the shouts of friends the buildings ring;
All that can bring good luck you there might view,
Each good old custom's honoured as was due,
Unbounded is the hospitality,
And every Brāhman gets an ample fee.
Then at the hour when the sun's rays decline,
And, raising dust, return the homeward kine,
•With jewelled neck and wrists and flower-crowned head,
And all his limbs with saffron overspread,
He mounts the dooley; loud the dance and song,
And bards sing praises while it moves along;
The slow procession streams a mile or more,
The city's deafened with the wild uproar;
Loud boom the elephant-drums, as on they go
In battle order as to meet a foe.
Meanwhile, advancing from the other side,
The followers of the brother of the bride
Come in strong force; the two processions meet,
And loud the crash and jostling in the street.

* Two other ingredients are mentioned about which I am doubtful, *pākuḍi-gāchhe* (or, as in the other edition, *kāḍi-gāchhe*) and *hāi āmalāti*; they may mean 'hemp-stalks' (*pākāṭi*) and some preparation of myrobalans.

† The second edition has 'snakes' curds.'

Hard words are bandied first; then, as they close,
 They seize each other's hair and rain their blows;
 They pelt with clods, and fiercer grows the fight,
 But still the bridegroom's party keep their light.
 But Lakshapati, hearing of the fray,
 Hastens these angry passions to allay;
 He grasps the bridegroom's hand with welcome loud,
 And bears him home in safety from the crowd.
 With tears of joy he first embraced him there,
 Then put the wonted perfumes on his hair,
 On the red blanket made him take his seat,
 And had the water brought to wash his feet,
 And gave him bracelets, sandal, gems, and rings,
 To mark the honour which his presence brings.
 Next Rambhā comes, and her glad welcome pays,
 With all the forms enjoined from ancient days;
 His feet are washed, the *arghya* dish brought in,
 And curds flung over him good luck to win.
 Next with a string she measures, as he stands,
 His under-lip and measures both his hands;
 Then with the selfsame string she ties him round
 And knits him fast to Khullanā, captive-bound;
 Seven times she winds the thread in tangles fast,
 And loops the end to Khullanā's skirt at last—
 A certain charm, so ancient dames have told,
 He will be silent howsoever she scold.

Next comes the giving of the bride: the Brāhmans on their seats rehearse
 In solemn tones before the crowd the Veda's consecrated verse;
 The nāch-girls dance and play and sing, no voice in all the throng is mute,
 While loudly sound the kettledrum and tambourine and conch and lute.
 Then round the bridegroom on a throne they bear her to the canopy;
 With smiling looks the happy pair now face to face each other see.
 From her own neck she takes the wreath and puts it round him with
 her hand,
 Loud are the shouts of all the friends, the *ulus* of the matron band.
 The father then takes kuṣa grass and Ganges water freshly poured,
 And, calling Durgā to attest, makes o'er his daughter to her lord;

And, the new kinsman welcoming, he gives him presents manifold,
Elephants, horses, litters, cars, silver, and costly robes, and gold.
Again the burst of music sounds, the Brāhmans bind and loose them both;
Then on Arundhati* they gaze, type of unwavering wedded troth;
Their parched-rice offerings next they pay to the star Rohiṇī and Sōm †;
Last to the sacred fire they bow, the guardian deity of home.
Then they are brought within the house, and there the husband and
the wife
Together eat the sugar-milk, the handsel-meal of married life. ‡

Rām's the first sound that wakes the new-born day;
The bridegroom rose his daily rites to pay;
The laughing relatives around him close,
And claim th' accustomed largess as he goes;
Then crowned with wreaths they seat the happy pair,
And all the maidens bring their presents there.
Some satins, silks, or sandal's richest smells,
Some fill the betel-box with cowrie-shells,
And gems for th' husband, and—auspicious sight!—
Rare shells with convolutions to the right!
Loudly the drums and conchs and tabours bray
To speed the parting bridegroom on his way;
The mother, as to take his leave he stands,
Puts the 'five jewels' § gently in his hands.
Prostrate before his fath'r-in-law he bows,
Then mounts the palanquin and leaves the house.

After spending some days at home in making festivities with his relations and friends, Dhanapati one day went to the Rāja's court to pay his respects. He finds that the Rāja has lately received from a fowler two

* A star in the Great Bear, also the wife of the seven rshis.

† The moon.

‡ The first, and also the last, meal which the husband and wife eat together.

§ These are the five precious things—gold, silver, pearls, crystal, and copper. See Kathās. S., ch. 77.

marvellous birds, a sārī* and a parrot, versed in all kinds of knowledge, and is desirous of procuring a golden cage to hold them. Such a cage can only be made in Gauṛ, the old capital of Bengal; and as Dhanapati arrives, by his ill fortune, at this juncture, he is peremptorily sent off to Gauṛ on this errand. He has to proceed at once, without being allowed to return to his house; he can only send a hurried line to Lahanā, entrusting Khullanā and the household to her care. He arrives at Gauṛ, but finds continual obstacles and delays while the cage is being constructed, and he remains there many long months.

At first the two wives, left alone in the house, lived in perfect harmony together: Lahanā acted as the affectionate elder sister; she cooked her choicest dainties for Khullanā and devoted herself to making her happy. But this state of things did not last long; the maidservant Durbalā saw with disgust the unusual concord, and determined in her mind to do her best to put an end to it. "Where the two co-wives are not quarrelling, surely the maid in that house is crazy; I will carry tales of one to the other, she will love me like her own life." Durbalā soon kindled Lahanā's latent jealousy, as she warned her of her coming loss of influence when the merchant came home from his journey: "he will be the slave of her beauty; you will be only mistress in the kitchen."

Lahanā, in her despair, bethought her of an old friend of hers, a brāhman woman named Līlāvati, who professed to be well versed in philtres and charms; and she despatched Durbalā to her with a message and a rich present of plantains, rice, and cakes, with fifty rupees as a fee and some bright new cowries and betel-nuts. "Durbalā took two from these last on her own account, stuffing one into each cheek. The porters go before and behind, and she in the middle; slowly, slowly she marches, swinging her arms and gathering some campak flowers as she goes."

She left the writers' quarter on the left,
 And elated she entered the brāhman's quarter.
 She arrived at the house of the brāhmānī medicine-woman,
 She calls loudly at her door for the lady Līlā.

* *Turdus salica*. These two birds are often mated in Hindu legends. For a similar mating compare the traditional attachment between the *couleuvre* (adder) and the *murène* in Provence, see Mr. J. B. Andrews (*Revue des traditions populaires*, tome ix, p. 335, 1894). Cf. *infra*, p. 30.

She gives her presents and pays her respects,
 And Līlāvati with kindly greeting takes her by the hand.
 She asks her for the news about her mistress,
 "You have not been here, Dya,* for many a day."
 Durbalā told her the whole story,
 "She wants some private talk with you."

When Līlāvati arrived, Lahanā poured out her griefs: "No husband in the house, a co-wife set over her head—trouble heaped upon trouble!" Līlāvati laughed at her disconsolate friend's sorrow. "Why are you so downcast at one co-wife? I have six co-wives at home, and think nothing of it!" She then described how she kept her mother-in-law and all her rivals quiet by means of her spells, and how her potions had completely subjugated her husband to her will. A long account follows of the various spells which she recommended her to use; but she especially recommended to her the spells of cheerfulness and gentle words.

"She who would win her husband's love must wait on him with smiling look, Not lose her beauty at the fire, for ever drudging as his cook; If thoughtless of her husband's wish, to all his interests blind and cold, The young wife is a constant care, just like the miser's hoarded gold; Or if her tongue is never still, of what avail will beauty be? Vain the silk-cotton's crimson flowers without the scent that lures the bee. Brown is the musk, the queen of scents; 't is sweetness wins the surest love, And the black kokil, by its song, enchants all listeners in the grove. Test for yourself th' advice I give—be gentle words henceforth your art; They are the best and surest pit t' ensnare that deer, your husband's heart." Lahanā answered: "Gentle words? good heavens! I know not what they mean;

I was a single wife too long, mine the sole rule the house within;
 I cannot meet this altered lot, my heart through fortune's spite is sore;
 Truly my cocoanut is spoiled, water has soaked it to the core!
 No gentle words I needed then; and, if my husband scolded me,
 I beat the board about his head and stormed in louder tones than he.
 Talk not to me of gentle words; tell me some better means, I pray—
 Oh what a sudden scurvy trick was this for destiny to play!
 See, I am utterly undone, the snake has bit me in the eye;
 Where can I bind the bandage tight to stop the poison's agony?"

* A colloquial abbreviation of Durbalā.

Līlavatī now begins to doubt as to the potency of her spells in such a desperate case as the present one; and the pair finally resolve to forge a letter as coming from the absent merchant to his elder wife at home. In it he is represented as lamenting his long absence and the continual expense it involves, and he asks her to send him some of Khullanā's gold ornaments; while Khullanā herself is to be set to tend the goats, and to wear the meanest clothes, and to sleep in the shed where the rice is shelled, in order to avert the malignant machinations of the demons. By this device the two conspirators hope that Khullanā's beauty will be spoiled, and thus her influence over the merchant brought to an end.

Ten days she kept the letter in its place,
 Then went to Khullanā with a fond embrace,
 With downcast looks and many a lying tear:
 "O sister, can I tell you what I hear?
 Hear for yourself this letter full of woe—
 How can you hope to 'scape this cruel blow."
 She read the lines, but only smiled—she knew
 The letter had a look that was not true.
 "I have no fear, good sister," answered she;
 "Who has been writing this to frighten me?
 My husband forms his strokes in different wise—
 Who has been tricking us with forgeries?"
 "Surely our lord dictated what is writ,
 Although another's hand indited it;
 Think of the many servants he has got,
 Ready to do his bidding on the spot.
 You must e'en tend the goats as best you may;
 His orders, like the king's, brook no delay."
 "Crowned as a bride I came, unthinking, glad;
 How short an hour of wifehood have I had!
 What fault of mine deserved such punishment?
 Why such a cruel letter has he sent?
 Go, Lahanā, mind your own concerns in peace,
 And all these domineering meddlings cease."
 "Little you know, you rākshasī accurst;
 Ill was the hour you showed your face here first;

The king the order gave which caused the ill,
That hateful cage which keeps the merchant still;
'Tis this that sends you out the goats to tend;—
Blame your own fate, not me, and there's an end!"

"Then if that letter is our lord's, his own,
Where is the messenger, who brought it, gone?
Of all the servants whom he took to wait,
Has even one been seen within our gate?"

"To make the cage he has not gold enough;
Three servants came, impatient to be off;
They took the gold and vanished in a trice—
You were too busy at your favourite dice.
Two wives like us, left husbandless alone,—
I fear we're sure to quarrel while he's gone.
You married him for his wealth—you know 'tis true,—
Am I to be your slave and wait on you?"

"Childless old woman, if you thus presume,
I'll beat you, as your mistress, with my broom."

"Durbalā, you have heard this forward chit;
Shall she go off and I submit to it?
But yesterday she left the nursery,
And now she dares to bandy words with me!"

Each shook in wrath her bracelet-jangling arm;
The neighbouring wives come running in alarm.
By sad mischance, poor Khullanā's hand, though weak,
Came in collision with the other's cheek;
The touch was slight, but Lahanā's fury rose,
And all on fire, she dealt her angry blows;
Each stormed and cuffed, and pulled the other's hair,
In vain the neighbours tried to part the pair;
Helplessly wondering, they watched the fray,
And Lahanā's tongue soon drove them all away.
Each on the other then her anger bent,
Their armlets, anklets clashed, their clothes were rent;
Like showers of hail their mutual blows fell fast,
But Khullanā was overpowered at last.

In vain she called her absent husband's aid,
Lahanā listened to no word she said;

She strips her of her bracelets and her rings,
 Torn from her head her wreath and pearls she flings,
 Her anklets, armlets, zone, away she bears,
 And from her waist her silken *sāri* tears,
 Poor Khullanā stands of all her pride bereft,
 Only her iron ring of wifehood left; *
 Thirsty and tired and weeping, there she stands,
 A rope tied tightly round her neck and hands.
 Even Durbalā feels compassion as she weeps,
 And brings some water for her thirsty lips.
 Gently she thanks her in a grateful tone,
 "O Duyā, but for you, my life had gone."

Low at her feet she falls and weeps: "Oh help me in my loneliness;
 I come with straw between my teeth, a suppliant in sore distress.
 I have no friend nor kindred near; my husband, he is far away,
 And Lahanā in the empty house tiger-like rages for her prey.
 O Durbalā, I rest on thee, be thou my help for pity's sake;
 Go tell my mother, as from me—'t was she who made the sad mistake—
 'Your daughter Khullanā is dead—oh what a wondrous gain you got
 When to her fate you sold your child!—abide in joy and sorrow not.'
 And tell my father, here alone, through Lahanā's tortures I expire—
 'T was his own hand that ruthlessly threw his poor daughter in the fire."

Durbalā. She punishes the least offence with blows,
 For a small fault she'd cut off ears and nose;
 I must not vex her—you must wait, I say,
 I'll take your message when I find a way.
 In the meantime be patient and submit,
 And feed the goats, if she insists on it.
 I'll take your message safely—never fear—
 And in a trice your father will be here."
 Next Lahanā came, her harsh command to press,
 While Duyā brushed the mud that stained her dress;

* This is the iron ring always worn on the left hand of a married woman; it is laid aside in widowhood.

The staring neighbours gather from the town,
 And Līlā counts the goats and writes them down.*
 Says Lahanā: "I will mark them every one,
 That any changeling stranger may be known;
 And should one die, if I the body see,
 I will say naught, and she from blame be free."
 Poor Khullanā, helpless in her bitter woe,
 Put on her rags and sadly turned to go;
 Durbalā only showed a little care,
 And brushed the dust while Lahanā bound her hair.
 Slowly she goes with leaves her head to shade,
 And in her hand a simple switch was laid.
 The goats run scampering, heedless where they roam,
 And angry farmers storm to see them come.
 Her flower-like body in the sun's fierce heat
 Seems withering up, her clothes are steeped in sweat.
 A river stops her—urged by greater dread,
 She carries every goat across its bed;
 Next comes a wood in sight, beneath the boughs
 The hurrying goats disperse themselves to browse;
 She hears the wolf's sharp howl, and wild with fear
 Runs to and fro to show that she is near;
 The *kuç* grass with its needles stabs her foot,
 And drops of blood betray her devious route.
 Wearied at last, she sits beneath a tree
 Watching the goats stray heedless o'er the lea.
 At length she stirs herself at evening-fall,
 And drives her goats together to their stall,
 Then waits for Durbalā to bring her fare,
 All that the stingy Lahanā can spare.
 Coarse was the meal—an arum leaf for dish—
 Old refuse rice, poor pulse, and common fish;
 Tough egg-plant stalks, of withered gourds a slice,
 But ne'er a pinch of salt to make it nice.

* In the original there here follows a long list of the names of the goats, filling ten lines—*Mālatī, Bimalā, Dhūlt, etc.* It is an interesting illustration of St. John, x, 3, "he call " his own sheep *by name*."

Khullanā, weeping, eats as best she may,
 Swallows a part and throws the rest away,
 While Lahanā comes and watches at her side,
 And scolds her for her daintiness and pride.
 On her straw bed she lies each weary night,
 And leads her goats afield each dawning light.
 Some rice, half dust, is in a bundle tied,
 And thus the day's provisions are supplied.
 Carrying her switch in hand she wanders slow,
 And on her head a leaf to cool her brow.
 Under pretence of bringing water there
 One morning Durbalā hurried after her.
 "I saw," she cried, "your parents yesterday,
 And told them all, but nothing could they say.
 Your mother grieved the doleful story heard,
 But good or bad she answered ne'er a word;
 And your old niggard father, I declare,
 Sent you some paltry cowries—here they are."

. 10. 20. 82 . . .

At length the spring came down upon the woods,
 And the spring breezes woke the sleeping buds;
 The season sends its summons forth to all,
 And every tree hangs blossoms at its call;
 The drunken bees feel waking nature's power,
 And roam in ecstacy from flower to flower,
 Just as the village priest, the winter done,
 Wanders elsewhere to greet the vernal sun.
 Amidst the leaves she hears the cuckoo's voice,
 And the known note makes all her heart rejoice.
 "Oh will my lord come back," she cries, "to-day?
 He has been gone a weary time away."
 But while she counts the months, by chance she sees
 A parrot and a sārī in the trees;
 Loud she upbraids them—they had done the wrong,
 Their luckless cage had kept her lord so long.
 "That golden cage, that whim of yours, in truth,
 Has made poor Khullanā widowed in her youth;

You drove my lord from home, and I forlorn
Was left a cruel co-wife's drudge and scorn.
She grudges me my food, or clothes to wear,
I wander keeping goats in my despair.
Have you come here to wreak your angry will
Because that cage remains unfinished still?
Take care, be wise, my patience has a bound,
I may turn fowler, reckless how I wound;
I may ensnare the parrot in the tree,
And leave the sārī widowed just like me.
But if you feel compassion for my pain,
List to my prayer, fly back to Gaur again,
My husband seek, and pour into his ear
The tale of all the miseries which I bear."

At last the goddess sends a dream to Lahanā which alarms her, and she fetches Khullanā back and begins to treat her more kindly; and, by a similar dream, she reminds the merchant of his forgotten home duties. He has been wasting time on his own pleasures during his long stay of more than a year in Eastern Bengal, under the pretext of watching the construction of the cage. Warned by the dream, he delays no longer, but returns with the cage, and is welcomed by the Rāja with every honour.

Lahanā hears the news, and sore dismayed
Turns for some help to her deceitful maid:
"The master has at last come back, I hear;
Khullanā will bewitch his mind, I fear:
Where are the ointments, charms, and philtres stored?
Help me, I pray, and win me back my lord."
Durbalā brought the box, well pleased to tell
The mystic uses of each drug and spell;
But while her mistress tries each charm in turn,
She breathless runs poor Khullanā's thanks to earn.
"O little mother, let me kiss your feet,
Come out and hear the music in the street;
Your hope's fulfilled, my lord's come home at last,
And your long night of misery is past.

I have no mistress now but only you,
 I am all yours—you know my words are true.
 I'll bear you witness what your griefs have been,
 I've vexed my inmost heart for what I've seen.
 Show him the rags and switch; disprove her lies,
 And make her presence hateful to his eyes,
 Multiply all her misdeeds as you please;
 Faint heart ne'er brought a rival to one's knees,"
 Poor Khullanā smiled to hear such comforting,
 And gave the girl in gratitude a ring;
 Then Duyā rose and brought the jewel-case,
 And straight unlocked its stores before her face,
 While she adorned her mistress with the best,
 And with art's utmost skill her person dressed,
 Rings, gold, pearls, jewels—what can art do more?
 When lo! they hear the merchant at the door!
 He bids farewell to his attendant train,
 And calls for his wife to greet him home again.
 Khullanā comes at once her lord to meet,
 And pours a stream of oil before his feet;
 But she was as a stranger to his eye,
 Some nymph, perhaps, come down from Indra's sky;
 His compliments but pained her as she heard,
 And with head bowed she answered ne'er a word.
 Covering her face she turned within at last,
 But Duyā heard behind the door what passed,
 And eager to be friends with both she flew
 To tell th' expectant co-wife all she knew.
 "Oh have you heard, my lady, what has come?
 My lord, thank heaven! has safely reached his home,
 And who but Khullanā, forward minx though prim,
 Has rushed to be the first to welcome him!
 She with her youth, best clothes, and fineries,—
 What an unfair advantage 't was to seize!
 She never asked your leave, but ran to th' gate,
 Eager to be the first at any rate.
 Had we but had a wiser lord, alack!
 He would have scorned her tricks and thrust her back."

Lahanā begs Durbalā to finish adorning her, and thus arrayed she hastes to make up for her lost time; but when she comes before the merchant, he appals her by asking her who was the beautiful stranger whom she had already sent before her to give him the first welcome. Lahanā pours out her complaints.

“ When first you went, a long and weary age,
Sent by the king for that unlucky cage,
You left young Khullanā in my special care,
No thought and no expense was I to spare.
I did my best—so much I will aver—
But little was the help I got from her.
She never stirred to cook the household fare,
Nor lent a hand to help me with my hair;
Dress her one thought or cooking something nice,
Or with some idle friends to play at dice.
I used to dress her out; my gems and rings
She wore as if they were her proper things;
No moment from her constant claims was free,
Durbalā had no time to wait on me;
On every choicest dish she must be fed,
And at unheard of hours her meals were spread.
She never cares to pay a visit home,
Nor lifts her hand to have her mother come;
To spend the money is her only thought,—
Fancy the waste and mischief she has wrought!”
Her outburst well her lord could understand,
And slipped a golden bracelet in her hand.

The merchant then arranges that Khullanā is to prepare a special feast for himself and his friends, and, in spite of all Lahanā's machinations, it all turns out as he wished.

III.

KHULLANĀ'S ORDEAL.

The merchant Dhanapati was one day playing backgammon with some friends, when his family priest entered and reminded him that the first anniversary of his father's death was near at hand, at which time he would have to offer the customary ancestral sacrifice called the çrāddh. Dhanapati, who had been absent on the king's commission in Gaur when his father died, determines to perform the rites with every mark of honour; and he invites all his kinsmen and the principal members of the merchant caste in all the neighbouring towns to be present. They come in great numbers and assemble at his house on the appointed day. Dhanapati performs the çrāddh, and then follows the description of the reception of the guests.*

The çrāddh was over and the Brāhmans gone,
 Loaded with costly presents every one,
 When, full of care, his way the merchant wends
 To pay due honours to th' assembled friends.
 How shall he likeliest give the least offence,
 To whom presume t' assign the precedence?
 Cānd is the first in character and race,—
 Cānd is the one who best deserves the place.
 'Tis Cānd to whom he turns the first to greet,
 And brings the water first to wash his feet,
 Then draws the sandal-mark upon his brows,
 And round his neck the flower-wreathed garland throws.
 But Çankha Datt in sudden wrath out burst,
 "I in these meetings am by right the first.
 Lo! Dhūsha Datt can witness how of late
 His father's çrāddh he had to celebrate;

* The original has a description of the çrāddh which I omit. A full account of the various ceremonies is given in Colebrooke's Essays, vol. i.

Full sixteen hundred merchants, one and all
 Of stainless credit, gathered in his hall,
 Yet I was first of all that company;
 Too much good luck has made you blind, I see.”
 Retorts the merchant, “First, I grant, you were;
 But why so? Cāṇḍ, I warrant, was not there.”
 His wealth and virtues are alike untold,
 Even his outer court* is filled with gold.”
 At this Nīlāmbar sneers, “And think you, then,
 That gold can purchase everything for men?
 His six poor childless wives bemoan their fate,—
 Can gold light up a house so desolate?”
 “I know you well, Nīlāmbar,” Cāṇḍ replies,
 “Your father too,—there’s many a rumour flies.
 He used to sell myrobalans, fame avers,
 With all the city’s scum for purchasers.
 His cowrie-bundles, with a miser’s care,
 He stowed away here, there, and everywhere;
 He’d stand for hours, and then, the hustling o’er,
 Go home and dine, with ne’er a bath before.”
 “Well,” says Nīlāmbar, “well, and why this din?
 He plied his lawful trade,—was that a sin?
 And then the snack which you his dinner call,—
 A sop of bread on plantain, that was all.”
 Nīlāmbar’s son-in-law, Rām Rāy by name,
 Now interposes to divert the blame:
 “If we’re to wrangle on a caste affair,
 Had we not better turn our thoughts elsewhere?
 When a young wife keeps goats in woods alone,
 Is there no loss of caste to anyone?”
 At this around the room a murmur went,
 One whispers and his neighbour nods assent,
 And then Rām Rāy, to deepen the offence,
 Called for the Harivaṃṣa’s evidence.

* The *mahals* are the different compartments into which a Hindu mansion is divided, each containing its garden, with rooms round it on all four sides.

All sat awaiting what would happen next,
 While the old Brāhman read the sacred text;
 The unfriendly merchants laughed or jibed aloud,
 While Dhanapati sat with head low bowed.

A passage is then read from the Harivaṃṣa which illustrates, by the story of Ugrasena's queen, how dangerous to female chastity lonely wanderings in the forest may prove. Rām Kuṇḍa then proposes that the passage from the Rāmāyaṇa should be read which describes how Rāma, after rescuing his wife Sītā from her imprisonment in Laṅkā, only received her again after she had proved her purity by entering unharmed a burning house of lac.

Then Alamkāra Datt next wags his tongue :
 " Our host may well suspect there 's something wrong ;
 His wife kept goats and wandered without let,—
 Who knows what drunken ruffians she has met ?
 So let her pass the ordeal ; till that 's done,
 Who 'll taste the food she cooks ? Not I, for one.
 Or if the ordeal's risk unwelcome be ,
 Then let him pay a lac and so be free."
 Here Lakshapati * threatens : " I shall bring
 The whole affair at once before the king."
 Then Çaṅkha Datt : " Has pride your heart so filled
 That you must play the king upon the guild ?
 Take care, for Garuḍ's † son his caste defied,
 But the sun scorched his wings and tamed his pride.
 If it's the king to whom we must resort,
 Let us all go in a body to the court ;
 But kings know more of criminal penalties,
 These caste disputes the caste itself best tries.
 Duryodhana, they say, though stout and brave,
 Scorned the advice of ten, and found a grave.

* Dhanapati's father-in-law.

† The king of birds ; his son was Sampāti.

It still holds true; if ten your conduct blame,
•And you stand out, then woe betide your fame!"
Meanwhile the host, while loudly thus they brawl,
Steals out dismayed to scold the cause of all.

"What craze possessed you, Lahanā, to send your co-wife to the wood
To tend her goats—you'll rue the day—left houseless in the solitude?
You promised me to keep her safe; basely have you betrayed the trust;
For your own ends you've ruined her and dragged my honour in the dust.
A king will vex by open force, by slanderous tongues our kith and kin;
A serpent by its spring and bite—but yours a deadlier wound has been.
I married her to have a son, to build for me a bridge to heaven,
That so the ancestral offerings, when I was gone, might still be given.
For who is like the sonless man—what bitterness is such as his?
In the three worlds he has no hope—life is one string of miseries.
What is my life now worth? Go bring a knife or poison, let me die;
We shall be glad then, both of us, but not e'en you so much as I."

From her he goes to Khullanā, and urges her by every plea
To shun th' ordeal's unknown risks and calmly face the calumny.
"Leave the ordeal's test alone; stay still at home, your proper place.
Were you by some ill chance to fail, how could I look men in the face?
E'en should there be some fault in you, 't is not for me to utter blame;
'T was I who left you thus exposed; ill I deserve a husband's name.
You wandered in the wood alone—women are weak by nature all;
Old stories swarm with precedents how soon they, left uncared for, fall.
Cease then your fear, I'll pay the sum, and should some cross-grained
wretch still pout,
I'll pay it down a second time—my purse will yet a while hold out."

•
"O foolish husband, if you give to-day,
Year after year you'll have the same to pay.
Year after year they'll wring by force their claim,
And far and wide will blow my tale of shame.

I must, then, brave th' ordeal—it must be ;
 I will drink poison if you hinder me."
 Deep in his heart he knew her innocent,
 And from his face the cloud of trouble went.
 With lightened heart he entered now the hail,
 And asked their presence at his festival,
 And "Khullanā," he said, "shall cook for all."
 Most of th' invited guests seem pleased to come ;
 Only Nilāambar downward looks in gloom.
 "The tenth—my father's çrāddh is on that day ;
 How can I then eat flesh with you, I pray ?"
 'T was an old wound that rankled in his breast—
 The sore seemed healed, but still the merchant guessed.
 "I ask you not to eat our common fare,
 Eat rather what your Brāhmans will prepare ;
 But when the çrāddh is over, be my guest—
 Your simple presence is my one request."
 "In Gayā's shrine and Puri's have I stood—
 I must not eat an alien gotra's food."
 Glancing askant in rage and wounded pride,
 In a rough voice the merchant thus replied :
 "Shall one whose ancestors have dealt in salt
 For fifty generations without halt
 Boast of his family, self-deceived and blind ?
 He retails salt to every low-caste hind,
 And out of every penn'orth sold by weight
 Steals a full quarter,—shall this boaster prate ?"
 Out spoke the merchant then, with anger filled ;
 Rām Kuṇḍa then, th' attorney of the guild,
 Catching a signal in Nilāambar's eye,
 Put forth his hand and deftly made reply :
 "'T is all a caste affair,—then what's amiss ?
 This one sells salt by caste, and potherbs this.
 You married a young girl, too young and fair ;
 She, keeping goats, has wandered,—who knows where ?
 A fish that's lying stranded on the shore,
 Or gold or silver on a lonely moor,—

Such is the maid who lone in forests hies ;
Who can refrain from seizing such a prize ?
This is the common judgment of mankind,—
And who shall call that common judgment blind ?
If Khullanā be spotless, as you say,
Th' ordeal let her pass in open day.
Then send the invitations round, and we
Shell all be glad to taste her cookery.”
Poor Dhanapati, thus on all sides pressed,
Accepts the challenge and awaits the test.

In Ganges water bathed and then bedight
With garments as the moon or jasmine white,
Khullanā offers at the goddess' feet
The flowers and lamps and perfumes as is meet.
Then walking round the image lifts her cry,
“ Oh save me in this hour of jeopardy ! ”
Low on the ground she pleads with sobs and tears,
Till moved t' her deepest heart the goddess hears.
Before her suppliant in the room she stands,
And on the low-bowed head she lays her hands.
She promises her presence and her aid,
And Khullanā no longer feels afraid.

Meanwhile the merchant holds a council sage :
A hundred paṇḍits reverend with age,
Arranged in state on seats of honour all,
Discuss th' ordeal's ceremonial.
They call on Yama ; then, as in his sight,
A mantra on two peepul-leaves they write ;
Two casual strangers next are led aside,
And on their heads the symbols twain are tied.
Into the lake they dive,—all tongues are still,—
But what strange shouts of joy the city fill ?

With her eight nymphs the goddess in her car
 Looks down upon the contest from afar.
 They rise, but not together now as erst,—
 'Tis Khullanā's foe gives in exhausted first.
 The leaves reversed, the divers plunge once more,
 But Khullanā still is conqueror as before.
 Says Çankha Datt: "Th' ordeal was not fair;
 There was collusion with the men, I swear.
 Leave all these tricks, and if you would decide
 Her innocence, some other test be tried."
 A deadly serpent next is brought,—its eyes
 Are two karañja blossoms in their dyes*;
 Wildly it hisses, pent its jar within,
 The jar seems bursting with the stifled din.
 The merchant drops his ring inside, and loud
 Rises a cry of wailing from the crowd.
 But Khullanā, kneeling, lifts her gaze on high
 And calls the Sun to help her purity,
 And seven successive times they see her bring
 Out of its prison, safe, the golden ring.
 There was a silent hush, till from the press
 Rām Dān's harsh voice broke out in bitterness:
 "'T is all a trick,—that serpent's mouth was bound,
 Or 't was a poor dull worm that could not wound."
 A smith set up his furnace on the spot
 And heated there an iron bar red-hot;
 Red like the newly risen sun it shone,
 Fear pierced the merchant's heart as he looked on.
 Upon a popul-leaf the mystic line
 He traced and placed within her hand the sign;
 They seize the bar with tongs as fierce it glows,
 And bring it reddening like a china rose;
 But Khullanā, dauntless, utters her desire:
 "Thou life of all that lives, hear me, O fire!

* "The karañja flowers are pretty large, of a beautiful mixture of blue, white, and purple."—*Rozburgh*.

If I have sinned, then scorch me with thy brand;
 If I am pure, rest gently in my hand."
 She stretches forth her hands the bar to clasp,
 The burning mass is lowered into her grasp;
 With head bowed low she bears it all alone,
 Through the seven rounds she bears it, one by one,
 Till on the straw at last the bar she lays,—
 Up in a moment flames the straw ablaze.
 Still Caṅkha Datt looks on in discontent,
 And thus he gives his bitter envy vent:
 "I'm half afraid to interpose my say,
 But false ordeals—what are they but play?
 There was some witchcraft in it—all was plann'd,
 Hence was that bar like water in her hand."
 Another test was tried—the Brāhmans came
 And set on fire some ghī,—up flashed the flame;
 But Khullanā, where the flame was fiercest, turned,
 Dropped the gold in, then took it out, unburned.
 Then Mādhab Candra: "Call you this a test?
 It was a false ordeal, like the rest.
 Pay the sum down, ordeals all are vain;
 So, your wife cleared, your honour you'll regain."
 Though sore provoked that thus each trial fails,
 Once more the merchant yields to try the scales,†
 Again does Khullanā, fearless, meet the event,
 Once more the proof proclaims her innocent.
 Then Ghūsha Datt comes forth the case to mend:
 "I sympathize with your distress, my friend;
 Your fellow-castemen, right and left, you see,
 Still wag their tongues whate'er th' ordeals be.

* The second edition here adds the account of another ordeal with *panai* water. A Bengali friend, whom I consulted on this obscure phrase, writes as follows: "*Pānā* is a plant which overspreads every foul tank; it is very common in Calcutta, and so is the word; *panai* means 'covered with *pānā*.' Water so covered is very cold, because it never feels the sunlight, and any person bathing in a tank covered with *pānā* is liable to have cutaneous diseases. The word is pronounced and written *pānāi* now." As the passage is omitted in the first edition, I have ventured to leave it out in my translation.

† See the Institutes of Vishnu, x (Jolly's transl., *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. vii); the innocent man weighs lighter at the second trial.

A lac-house was the test which Sitā passed,—
 To this one point they all come round at last.
 You are my mother's brother; this alone
 Would prove I have no interest but your own.
 Make a lac-house and let her enter in,
 This test will purge the faintest breath of sin."
 Then Māṇik Cāṇḍ: "I must no more sit mute,
 This test alone will settle the dispute.
 It was this test proved Sitā innocent,
 How can we find a better precedent?"
 At last the merchant yields, with anguish filled,—
 But where's the architect such house to build?

A solid mass of gold, a gourd (?) in size,
 With solemn state is offered as the prize.
 On a high pole his banner flouts the sky,
 While drums and trumpets bray their hoarse reply.
 Town after town—the rumour fills the land,
 But all shrink hopeless at the strange demand;
 "A house of lac, like Rām's!" the whisper ran;
 "The gods' ordeals who but gods can plan?"
 Meanwhile her secret schemes the goddess laid
 And summoned Viçwakarma* to her aid;
 Called by a thought he came, behind his back
 Stood Hanumat: "Go, build a house of lac."
 They go—an old man this, and that a boy—
 To undertake the perilous employ.
 The moon conducts them to the merchant's room:
 "To build the house of lac you need we're come."
 They stretch the measuring line and mark the ground,
 And dig a trench seven cubits deep all round.
 Of lac the walls are made, of lac the floors,
 Of lac the beams, the rafters, and the doors,

* The architect of the gods.

Of lac the struts and tie-beams every one,
Of lac the roof and all that's laid thereon.
The house thus built, away the builders went,
While all the guild gaze on in wonderment;
"Her honour's stainless," e'en Nilāmbar saith,
"Who 'scapes unscathed from such a certain death."

But Khullanā, at the novel risk dismayed,
Turns to her old protectress for new aid.
The goddess hears her prayer of anxious dread,
And gently lays her hand upon her head;
And tears of joy from Khullanā's eyes o'erflow
As she pours forth the story of her woe.
Awhile the goddess muses; then her will
Calls Fire himself to avert the threatened ill.
Swift at her bidding mighty Agni came,
Eager to know what service she would claim.
"The fiery test my votary is to brave;
Lo, I entrust her in thy hands to save."
He answered: "Cool as sandal will I be;
Thy bidding is my highest dignity."
Then as a pledge to bid her fears begone,
In Khullanā's hand he lightly placed his own;
'T was cold,—she shrank not as the fingers kissed,
Not e'en the lac* was melted on her wrist.

Around her neck the goddess' wreath she wore;
And as she stepped within the fatal door
She fired the hall: the flames spread far and wide,
Swelled to the roof and soared aloft outside.
From her chaste body, lo! their tongues retire,
Cold as the sandal is that blasting fire. •

Hindu women often wear rings on their wrists made of shell-lac.

High to the sky the dark smoke-pillars rise ;
 The gods themselves gaze down with wondering eyes.
 Loud as June thunder roars the o'ermast'ring blaze,
 E'en the Sun's horses rear in wild amaze !
 The rafters melt, the cross-ties, roof and all ;
 Melt the four walls, and in one crash they fall.
 A shower of flowers rains downward from above,—
 Ne'er did this æon such high courage prove !
 Poor Sītā's tale is all long-past and old,—
 We have heard it with our ears, but this our eyes behold !

Meanwhile the merchant beats his head and flings himself upon the ground
 In the mid flames he fain would spring, but that his friends his hands have
 bound :

"Loved of my soul, I see thee not,—and life is worthless, left of thee ;
 Where thou art gone I too will go,—I will be with thee presently.
 Ah, faithless husband that I was ! I left thee in the co-wife's power,
 Hence all those wanderings in the wood, and all the misery of this hour !"
 The kinsmen weep in sympathy, with hair unbound and looks distraught ;
 And even Lahanā feels remorse when she sees all her spite has wrought.

The smoke cleared off, the fire burned fierce and bright,
 But oh ! no Khullanā appears in sight !
 In agony of heart the merchant turns,
 And wildly rushes where it fiercest burns,
 When from the very centre of the flame
 To his stunned ears a cry of "Victory !" came,
 And forth she stepped and stood before the throng,
 Chanting aloud to all her 'victory' song.
 From her thick hair the drops of moisture rained ;
 The shell upon her wrist was still unstained ;

Still flowed her robe uninjured to her feet,
Nor had one fibre shrivelled in the heat.
As she stands radiant, her maligners all
Before her feet ashamed and prostrate fall ;
And Çakha Datt is first to own his sin,—
How blind and obstinate they all have been. .
“Curse us not, sister,” is their common prayer ;
“Forgive the pride that made us what we were.”
Nilambar Dās came forward with the rest
And tardily his error thus confessed :
“Count me your brother,—no ill-will I bear,—
Gladly I'll eat your rice if you'll prepare.”
Then said Rām Dān, his voice half-choked and low :
“You are no mortal woman,—now I know ;
Who would believe me if the tale I told ?
Who has e'er heard the like in days of old ?”

Triumphant thus in all the various tests,
Khullanā now prepares to feast her guests.
They fill the court, arranged in order round,
Seated by precedence upon the ground ;
And Khullanā herself, all smiling, waits,
And hands the rice to all in golden plates.
First soup of bitter herbs to give a zest,
Then potherbs with a savoury relish dressed ;
Fried fish ; kid curry,* and a thick rich broth ;
And every dish is perfumed. Nothing loth,
The guests applaud the courses as they come,
And fragrant steam mounts up and floats through every room.
The lighter dishes next in due degree,—
Sweetmeats and curds, and rice-made firmity.

* This book is written by a Çakta, i.e. a worshipper of Durgā according to Tāntric rites ; and Çaktas eat fish and kid's flesh.

All wash their mouths, and, ending the repast,
 Camphor and betel-leaf are handed last.*
 Each guest receives his present when they part;
 The merchant's open hand wins every heart.
 Then to Durvāsa,† patron of the clan,
 A horse is given whereon sat never man;
 While Kauṣikī‡ receives her ewer of gold,
 And unto Sātgaṇ's guilds their silken bales are told.

* These lines are repeated in the same words in another part of the poem, but with a different couplet at the end:

Then pulpy durian-seeds are handed last,
 And juicy mangoes finish the repast.

† A celebrated ancient sage.

‡ A form of the goddess Durgā or Caṇḍi.

Recd. on... 25.10.78

R. R. No... 7049

G. R. No... 26470



